

REMARKS

Claims 1-7, 9, 11-18 and 20-24 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claims 1 and 12 have been amended, claims 10 and 19 canceled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter found therein, and claims 21-24 added. Support for claims 21 and 22 is found in paragraph [0031] of the Application as published (2004/0228656) and claims 22 and 24 by Fig. 10.

In paragraph 2, on page 2 of the Office Action, claims 1-6, 9-15 and 17-20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being anticipated by Yoshikawa, JP 2001-142279, in view of Nomura et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,708,011 (Nomura) and in paragraph 11, on page 5 of the Office Action, claims 7 and 16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Yoshikawa and Nomura in view of Omata et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,442,356 (Omata). The rejections are respectfully traversed.

Applicant's claim 1 calls for an image forming apparatus, comprising an endless belt configured to be rotatably driven; a plurality of image carriers disposed in a moving direction of the endless belt; a plurality of charging units, a charging unit provided for each image carrier of the plurality of image carriers and configured to uniformly charge a surface of an associated image carrier; a plurality of exposing units, each exposing unit configured to expose an associated image carrier of the plurality of image carriers charged by the associated charging unit to form an electrostatic latent image on each image carrier of the plurality of image carriers; and a plurality of developing units, a developing unit provided for each image carrier of the plurality of image carriers and configured to develop the electrostatic image on an associated image carrier with a developer of different color to form a developer image, wherein the endless belt is configured to transfer the developer image formed on each image carrier of the plurality of image carriers to form a color image, the developing unit provided at a most upstream position with respect to the moving direction of the image belt forms the

developer image with a developer of black color, and the each developing unit is configured to be separable from the associated image carrier and detachable from the image forming apparatus, each developing unit comprising a developer supplying unit disposed to be in contact with a developer carrier and supplies the developer carrier while charging the developer, and the developer of black color is configured to be more chargeable than developers of other colors.

Applicant's claim 12 calls for an image forming apparatus, comprising an endless belt configured to be rotatably driven and to convey a recording medium; a plurality of image carriers disposed in a moving direction of the endless belt; a plurality of charging units, a charging unit provided for each image carrier of the plurality of image carriers and configured to uniformly charge a surface of an associated image carrier; a plurality of exposing units, each exposing unit configured to expose an associated image carrier of the plurality of image carriers charged by the associated charging unit to form an electrostatic latent image on an associated image carrier of the plurality of image carriers; and a plurality of developing units, a developing unit provided for each image carrier of the plurality of image carriers and configured to develop the electrostatic image on an associated image carrier with a developer of different color to form a developer image, wherein each of the plurality of image carriers transfer the developer images onto the recording medium to form the color image, and the developing unit provided at a most upstream position with respect to the moving direction of the endless belt forms the developer image with a developer of black color, each developing unit comprising a developer supplying unit disposed to be in contact with a developer carrier and supplies the developer onto the developer carrier while charging the developer, and the developer of black color is configured to be more chargeable than developers of other colors.

With respect to claims 1 and 12, Yoshikawa, the primary reference, says nothing about the developer of a black color is configured to be more chargeable than the developers

of other colors. The Office Action ascribes this feature to Fig. 1. It is unclear how a figure could show such a feature and Applicant knows of no discussion within the reference directed to this feature. An advantage of the more chargeable black developer is discussed in paragraph (g) on page 22 over to 23 of Applicant's specification. Yoshikawa merely states that the color mixture toner that consists of the four colors is usable as a black toner with no practical problems introduced even when used as a black toner (paragraph [0052]). Thus Yoshikawa neither identifies the problem Applicant addresses nor the solution.

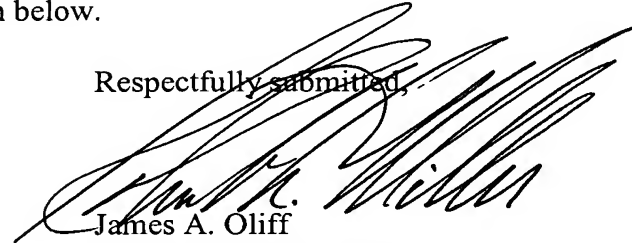
Nomura is solely cited for detachable developing units. This is to overcome another deficiency of Yoshikawa with respect to the claimed invention as discussed in the Amendment filed August 12, 2005. Thus, it is respectfully requested the rejection of claims 1-6, 9-15 and 17-20 be withdrawn.

As to the rejection of claim 7 and 16, Omata does not overcome the deficiencies of Yoshikawa and Nomura. Further, there is no reason to combine Omata with the other references as Omata teaches a different orientation of the developing units. In Applicant's claimed invention, the most upstream developing unit has the black developer. In Omata, the most downstream developing unit has the black developer (Fig. 2; col. 3, lines 20-24). Therefore, it is respectfully requested the rejection of claims 7 and 16 be withdrawn.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 1-7, 9, 11-18 and 20-24 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



James A. Oliff

Registration No. 27,075

Robert A. Miller

Registration No. 32,771

JAO:RAM/smo

Date: February 3, 2006

OLIFF & BERRIDGE, PLC
P.O. Box 19928
Alexandria, Virginia 22320
Telephone: (703) 836-6400

**DEPOSIT ACCOUNT USE
AUTHORIZATION**

Please grant any extension
necessary for entry;
Charge any fee due to our
Deposit Account No. 15-0461